

Okra with Salame and Tomatoes

We love okra. Some people say it's slimy and refuse to consider it. We say this dish could convert them. By charring the okra whole (no goo oozing out from slices) in a wicked-hot pan, you get crisp-tender pods. Don't relegate okra to a gumbo limbo. Our salame-tomato sauce is surprisingly sweet, tart and savory all at once, so it's really makes okra the perfect side dish for almost anything.

See Cook's Note on how to prepare the okra.

Ingredients

4 vine-ripe tomatoes, halved, about 1 pound total
3 cloves garlic
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 ounces Sopressata Salame Chub, cut into 1/4-inch cubes
1 pound small okra (about 3 inches long), stems trimmed
Pinch paprika (optional)

Directions

Grate the flesh of the tomatoes on the large holes of a box grater into a bowl and discard the skins. Grate the garlic on a microplane into the tomato pulp. Stir in the salame and 1/8 teaspoon of the salt.

Heat a 12-inch skillet over high heat for about 2 minutes; you want it rippin' hot. (A splash of water will evaporate instantly when it hits the pan.) Add the okra and the remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt and give the pan a shake. Then let the okra sit to start to char. You want the okra in one layer, so work in batches if you need to. Continue to shake, let the okra sit, and shake again until the okra are charred in spots, 6 to 8 minutes. Turn okra onto a plate. With the lid close by, pour the tomato-and-salami mixture, and paprika if using, into the pan. Stir to keep the sputtering down as you add it, and then cover to contain splattering and cook for about 30 seconds. Once the sauce has calmed down, uncover and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes or until most of the liquid has evaporated. Fold the charred okra into the sauce, toss to coat, and cook until pods are tender, about 5 more minutes.

Cook's Notes

It's vital for the okra to be very dry, or else they'll steam instead of char. Dry okra thoroughly with paper towels after washing or lay them on a paper-towel-lined tray to air dry.

total time: 20 minutes

active prep: 20 minutes

serves: 4 as a side

difficulty: easy